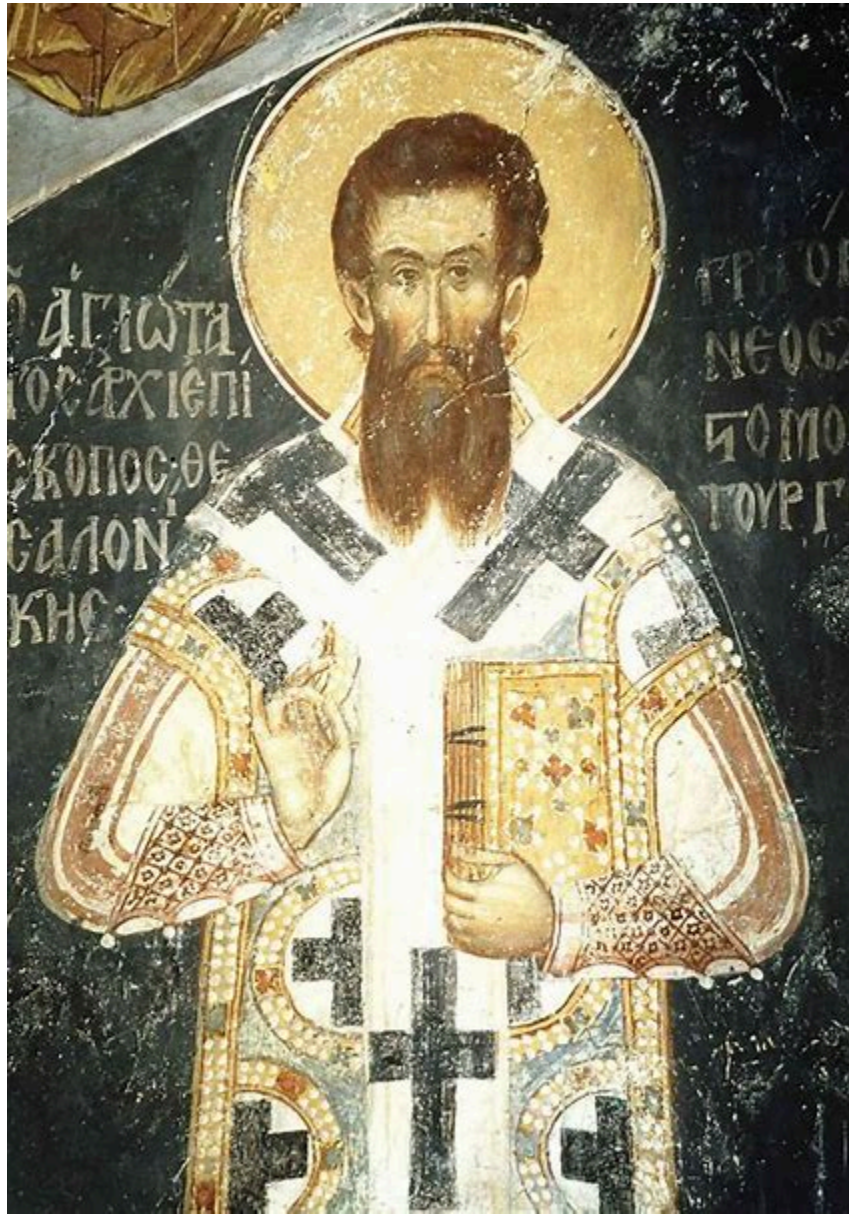


**St. Gregory Palamas' Letter To the Atheist Chiones  
An Exchange Written by, and Taken Place in the Presence of,  
Taronites the Doctor. an Ear-witness (1355 AD)**



There came the Chiones, “by the command of the Emir,” they said, “to converse with the metropolitan of Thessaloniki.” They were afraid, however, to start a controversy in front of him, and first of all, they tried to convince me, the bishop and especially the associates of the Emir that no confrontation may take place on such matters. Being unable to achieve this, they tried again to convince us that at least such a debate may not take place in front of the Emir; which

they succeeded. And he [the Emir] appointed a number of officials and a certain so-called Palapanes.<sup>23</sup> These men came along with the Chiones to the place where the metropolitan was. Thus, we sat all together, and the Chiones began a long talk. The main point of their talk was that “We were taught ten commandments which Moses brought down, written on slates of stone. We also knew that the Turks held the same ones. We left, therefore, the faith which we had before, came to them and became Turks too.”

The officials then asked the Metropolitan to respond, and he began with these words: “I should not respond now because who am I, compared to the height and greatness of the catholic and apostolic Church of my Christ, to try to defend her? I am only a minimal part of her and almost nothing at all. Secondly, these officials, who are also sitting as judges, support the side of the opponents, and it is not appropriate for me to show in what they will respond to the justifications of faith, which are the God-inspired Scripture and especially the books of the Prophets. Thirdly, I am kept in captivity, and I know from the example of the Lord, God, and Savior of ours, Jesus Christ, that after being convicted, even when asked questions, he did not give answers. However, since this is what the great Emir orders—and I perceive that God gave him the right to know what a ruler has to know because while the duty of the servant or a common individual is to know about one faith, and this only barely, it is necessary for him who has many races under his rule to know of all faiths and in an accurate way—for this reason, I want to talk about our faith, all that the word of God will provide for me as I will open my mouth. In doing so, I will not be responding to the Chiones. For they, from what I heard about them before and from what they are now saying, seem to be Jews, not Muslims;<sup>24</sup> and my talk now is not to the Jews.

Thus, this mystery of our faith goes like this: Only God is the eternal Being and the One who remains forever, without beginning, unchangeable, without end, immutable, uncompounded, unconfused, and unlimited. Every creature, however, is subject to corruption and change. Even the beginning itself is a change which came into being from non-existence. This God, therefore, the only one without a beginning, is not without wisdom. Thus, the word of God is also the wisdom of God, for wisdom is in the word and without word, wisdom does not exist.

Therefore, if there were ever a time when the word or the wisdom of God did not exist, God would then be without word and without wisdom, which is blasphemy and something impossible. Thus, the word of God also is without beginning, and the wisdom of God is never separated from Him. Also, there is no word ever without spirit, something you, too, Turks confess. For by saying that Christ is the Word of God, you confess him also to be the Spirit of God, for this [the word] is never separated from the spirit. Thus, God has both word and spirit, which are with Him and in Him without beginning and without separation. God was never, nor will He ever be, without Spirit or word. Therefore, all three are one and one the three.

God has word and spirit not in the manner we have them, vanishing in the air, but in a divine manner. To use an example: as the splendour of the sun is born from it, and the ray of the sun proceeds from it and comes down to us and never, neither the splendour, nor the ray, are they separated from the disc—for which reason when we call them “sun” we do not say that each one of them is different from the one—in the same way when we say that the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit too, is God, we do not confess another God but only the One who is perceived to be without beginning and without end, with a co-eternal word and spirit. This is what the Word of God taught us to believe and confess: not only Christ but Moses also in the Decalogue, whom you, the Chinoes, bring forth. That is why he said, “God is one,” and he said the “one” three times. For he said the word “Lord” twice and the word “God” once to show that the three are one and the one three. Also, Moses, wanting to show from the beginning that God has word and spirit and that in them and with them He is one God creator of all created things, said, “God said: ‘Let it be light;’ and there was light.”<sup>26</sup> ... He said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation’ ... And it was so.”<sup>27</sup> And so that I may not repeat everything, as David said, “God said everything was made.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, this “God said, and everything was made” shows that God has word, for there is no speech without word. It also shows that all created things were made by the means of it. Thus, this word of God existed prior to all created things, and he was uncreated. The word of God, being uncreated, how is he not God since only God is uncreated? Moses, also teaching about man, says: “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, by saying that God breathed and that is how the living man was made, he shows that God also has spirit and that this spirit is creative. But only God is the creator of living beings. That is why Job says: “It is the spirit of God that made me.”<sup>30</sup>

The bishop of Thessaloniki<sup>31</sup> wanted also to string together the rest of the evidence from the prophets and, especially those through which it is shown that God works the renewal of man and the entire world by means of His spirit, such as what David says, “He sent forth his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction”<sup>32</sup> and elsewhere again “Thou shalt send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.”<sup>33</sup> These are the quotations which the bishop had started already stating when all those attending interrupted him saying, “What you are saying is true and cannot be otherwise.” Then the bishop responded to them, “God, therefore, these three, is one God, creator.” And they, either moved by the divine power to do so or because they were unable to object, agreed again, saying: “This is what you have shown, and this is the truth This is what we also maintain.” The bishop said: “Good. Glory be to our God who has willed so.” But they, too, said again: “But tell us this, how do you confess Christ to be God since he was a human and was born as human?” Again, the bishop, “God is not only sovereign and all-mighty, but righteous as well, as David the prophet says: ‘The Lord our God is righteous, and loves righteousness; there is no injustice in him.’”<sup>34</sup> There is no work of God, therefore, that does not have in it the righteousness of God. As the ray of the sun also has the life-giving power, as well as light and warmth, so does the divine energy have in itself the divine power and righteousness. God created man to do good deeds and commanded him to live

according to His own divine will. When, therefore, this man obeyed and submitted himself to the devil willingly, he sinned by transgressing the divine will, and he was justly sentenced to death; it was not congenial to God to redeem man from him [the devil] by force; that way He would have been unjust to the devil to have pulled out from his hands by force man whom he did not get by force. Also, the free will of man would have been destroyed by force and power, as God would have been freeing man, and it is not like God to destroy His own work. It was, therefore, necessary that a sinless man be made, who would be without sin and who would live without sin and who, this way, would help the man who had sinned willingly. For it says: “Not even one is without sin: if even his life should be but one day.”<sup>35</sup> David, the prophet, also says: “I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.”<sup>36</sup>

For this reason, the only sinless Word of God becomes a son of man, is born from a virgin, is witnessed to with the voice of the Father from heaven, is tempted and fought by the devil, defeats the tempter, shows and confirms through deeds, words and great miracles the faith and the conduct of salvation and, in this way, He who was innocent and sinless, by living (as a human) he takes up to himself the passions of us who were the responsible ones, even to the extent of death, so that He may descend also to Hades and save those in there who may believe.

At this point—as the bishop talked about the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord and of the testimonies of the prophets, which show that Christ is also God and that this God is the one who is witnessed to as having become man from the virgin and suffered for us and risen, and everything else—the Turks became disturbed. They interrupted him, saying, “How can you say that God was born and that the womb of a woman contained him, and many such things? God only said, and Christ, too, was made.”<sup>37</sup> He then told them, “God is not a big body that cannot fit because of its size into something small. On the contrary, by being incorporeal, He is able to be everywhere, beyond everything and in one single thing. He can fit even into the smallest possible thing imaginable.” They, however, protested again noisily, saying that “God only said and Christ, too, was made.” The bishop said again: “You confess that Christ is the word of God. A word, then, is made again by another word? In such a case, it means that the word of God is not co-eternal with God Himself. But I showed you this at the beginning, and you, too, confessed that God has a Word and a Spirit that is co-eternal with Him. That is why you call Christ not only the word but also the spirit of God. God said, and things were made, like this stone— pointing to a stone nearby —the herb and even the reptiles. Therefore, if Christ is the word and spirit of God because the word of God made him, then the stone, the herb and every one of the reptiles is also the word and spirit of God because in their case also, He said, and they were made! You see how absurd it is to say that “God said and Christ, too, was made”? The pre-eternal Word of God, even though he became human and took up flesh, without mixture [of the two] nor in the manner of flesh, is spirit and word of God. It was later, as we said, that he took up from us and, for our sake human nature. He was always in God as His co-eternal Word “through whom God created the world.” <sup>38</sup>



At this point, the Chiones interrupted him again. The presiding Palapanos, after he called for silence, said to the bishop, “The master demands from you to answer the question of how we accept Christ, love him, respect him, confess him to be God’s word and breath, and we also place his mother near to God, and yet you do not accept our prophet nor do you love him?” Then the bishop said: “He who does not believe in the words of a teacher cannot love the teacher himself; that is why we do not love Muhammad. Our Lord God, Jesus Christ, has told us that he will come again to judge the entire world. He also commanded us not to receive anyone else until He came back to us again. He also said to those who disbelieved in him: “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me, nor did you accept me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.”<sup>39</sup> That is why the disciple [sic] of Christ writes to us: “But even if an angel preaches to you contrary to that which you have received from us, let him be accursed.”<sup>40</sup>

Then the Chiones, along with the Turks, said to the bishop: “God handed down circumcision from the very beginning. Even Christ himself was circumcised. How, then, you do not circumcise yourselves?” Then the bishop: “Since you are referring to the old law and to what was handed down by God to the Hebrews at that time—for traditions of God also were the keeping of the Sabbath, the Jewish Passover, sacrifices which were to be offered exclusively by the priests, the altar in the interior of the temple and the dividing curtain—since God has also handed down all these and other such things, why do you not cherish any of them and you do not practice them?”

As the Chiones and Turks had no response to this, the bishop wanted to bring forth again those prophets who foretell clearly the transfer of the law and of that Old Testament and [who also foretell] that the transfer will take place through Christ. He started saying, “That which you also call old...?”<sup>41</sup> They interrupted him again, saying: “Why do you place many representations in your churches and you venerate them, even though God wrote and said to Moses: ‘Thou shalt not make a likeness of anything, whatever things are in heaven above, and whatever is in the earth beneath, and whatever is in the sea’?”<sup>42</sup> And the bishop said again, “Friends are venerated by each other, but they are not made gods. It is evident to everyone that this is, indeed, what Moses learned from God, and this is what he taught the people then. However, this same Moses again and at that time, left almost nothing of which he did not make a representation. He made the area beyond the curtain to be like and represent the celestial [reality]. Also, since the Cherubim are in heaven, he made representations of them and placed them into the innermost sanctuary of the temple. As to the exterior of the temple, he made it to represent the earthly [reality]. If anyone, then, had questioned Moses, “Why have you made anyway such things, since God forbids the icons and the likeness of things on earth?”, he would have, certainly answered that icons and representations are forbidden so that one may not worship them as gods. However, if one is to be elevated through them toward God, this is good!” The Greeks, too, praised created things but

they did so as if they were gods. We praise them too, but we elevate ourselves through them to the glory of God.” Then the Turks said again: “Did, indeed, Moses make these things then?” Answered many, “Yes, he did all these things.”

At this point, the officials of the Turks stood up, greeted the bishop with respect, and started leaving. One of the Chiones, however, stayed behind, insulted the great bishop of God, attacked him and beat him in the eye. The rest of the Turks who saw him got hold of him, rebuked him severely and brought him in front of the Emir, to whom they said whatever they said. What the Turks said to the Emir, we did not hear exactly. As to what we have written down, however, we have been ear-witnesses. We wrote down what we saw and heard under the sight of God Himself.

This exchange<sup>43</sup> took place in the month of July, on the eighth indiction of the year 1363.<sup>44</sup>

You should also know that I came to live in Nicaea, during which time, having some freedom, I briefly described to your love the things regarding my captivity, leaving aside those things regarding our brethren in Christ, my fellow captives for His sake. So that you may know a few things of what happened approximately there, it is only when they transfer us from city to city or town that the barbarians place guards for us, and it would be something very pleasant, indeed, to the ears of the Christians, if one had the time to write down their questions to us and our responses to them, or the things on which they concur with us, or simply all the conversations we had on the way. But when the guards bring us into the designated city or town, each one of them retires to his own, allowing us to stay or go wherever we please and to associate with anyone we want. I think that this, too, is not something is not of a major providence.

As soon as they left us free in Nicaea, we asked where most of the Christians in this city lived. When we learned that they lived by the monastery of Saint Hyacinth, we went there immediately and met with the Christians who were eagerly expecting us and wishing such a thing would happen. In the interior, beyond the yard of the monastery, we found a beautiful church and a well with fresh water in the midst of various thick-shade trees sumptuously blooming. The cool breeze, the comfort of the shade and the soothing quietness of the place made us settle there; actually, I did so, for I was alone. As far as the most God-loving chartophylax<sup>45</sup> is concerned, whom they had brought in front of the great Emir, I did not know where exactly he was allowed to stay. As to the hieromonks Joseph and my own Gerasimos, they were already in Constantinople at that time. Konstas Kalamaris was still alone in Prusa, living in the home of a pious man who had set him free with money. As he had not paid back the whole amount for his freedom when I arrived there, I paid the entire amount for him with God's help, or rather by a miracle, and he was set free. But I did not take him then with me, for I did not know where I would end up. But now, having written him and asked him to come, I, the captive, have him, the free man, as a companion and servant! And let this be added to the strange stories; that

the captive grants freedom to his fellow captive, and he, who is not even master of himself, has under his authority a free man!

In the ensuing, I will tell you a story from when, as I said, I was living alone: I once went out the gate of the city that was called “eastern,” the closest of all the others. As I had walked a little beyond the gate—what can I say about the height and the beauty of the buildings or about the fortifications; all these were in abundance in that city, although to no avail now! —Well, as I walked a little further, I saw a cubic structure made of marble and somewhat artistically decorated in the plains. I then asked those who happened to be around what the use of that cube was outside [the walls] of the city and standing there nearby, ready. They told me what the cube was for, and that is how the whole conversation ended. Then we heard wailing coming from inside the city. As we turned in the direction of the noise, we saw a whole group of barbarians bringing out the body of a dead man. Walking slowly, we came so close to them that we could see and hear what they said. When they arrived at the cube, they all observed an absolute silence and then more of them, lifting up the box wrapped in white sheets with the dead man inside, placed it solemnly on the cube. Surrounding him, they had in their midst one of their Tasimanes—this is what they call those dedicated to their sacred places. He, raising his hands, let out a cry, and they responded even louder. He did this three times. Then, those who were set to do the burying take the box up on their arms and walk further down. All the rest, with the Tasimanes, return home.

We also were returning, entering next to them the same gate, when we noted that the Tasimanes, with a few others, sat down under the shadow of the gate to enjoy the cool air of the season, for it was July. Suspecting that those sitting on the opposite side might be Christians, which they were, we sat down, too. As I was sitting there I asked whether anyone could speak both languages that I needed. There was somebody whom I asked to say to the Turks on my behalf that what they had performed outside there I thought was good, “for you addressed yourselves to God—to whom else?—for the deceased one. I wanted, however, to know what it was that you exclaimed to God?” Tasimanes, using the same interpreter, said that he would explain: “We asked for forgiveness from God for the deceased, for his own sins committed in his soul.” Retorting myself, I said, “Very well, but the judge is merciful, indeed, and dispenses mercy, and he who will come as judge of every race of men, even according to you, is Christ. You must be addressing, therefore, the prayers and the exclamations to Him. Thus you, too, invoke him as God, as we do, who believe that as an inborn Word of His, he is indivisible from the Father; for there was no time when God was without reason or without the natural word.” Tasimanes then said, “Christ, too, is a servant of God.”<sup>46</sup> I said to him, “But you must consider this, my good man, that as you also say, He will judge the living and the dead, who will rise and present themselves in front of Him at a fearful and impartial tribunal in the coming presence of His. Abraham, who is also your own forefather, as you have it in your own scriptures (for you insist that you uphold the tradition of Moses, as it is also maintained by the Jews), this Abraham,

therefore, says to God, ‘Thou that judgest the whole earth, shalt thou not do right?’<sup>47</sup> Thus He who will judge the entire earth is himself God, who, according to Daniel the prophet, is King of the whole universe forever,<sup>48</sup> being no different than the Father according to the divinity; in the same way as the brightness of the sun is no different than the sun, so far as the light is concerned.”

Tasimanès gave the impression that he found himself in a difficult situation, but after a brief silence, he started a longer speech. Then, many more Christians and Turks gathered to listen. Thus, he began saying that they accept all the prophets, including Christ, as well as the four books sent down from God, one of which is also the gospel of Christ.<sup>49</sup> When he finished, he turned the speech to me, saying, “Why then, do you not accept our prophet, or do you not believe that his book came down from heaven?” I told him again: “Your custom and our custom that has been confirmed by antiquity and law is to accept or consent to nothing as true without witnesses. There are two kinds of witnesses: either those of their works and deeds or those of trustworthy persons. Thus, Moses disciplined Egypt with signs and marvels. With his rod, he split the sea into two and united it again. He also brought down bread from heaven. But what is the use of mentioning the rest since you also believe in Moses? He has also been witnessed to by God as a trustworthy servant, although not as a Son and Word. Later on, at God’s commandment, he ascended the mountain and died, and he added himself to those who had preceded him.

“On the other hand, Christ, in addition to the extraordinary things that he did, which are many and great, is witnessed by Moses himself and the other prophets; He is also the only one who is called eternal Word of God by you, as well. He is the only one ever born of a virgin; the only one ever who ascended into heaven and remains there immortal; the only one ever who is hoped to come back thence to judge the living and the dead who will rise—to say about him only what you, too, the Turks confess. It is, therefore, for these that we believe in Christ and His Gospel. As far as Muhammad is concerned, we do not find that he is either witnessed to by the prophets or that he did anything unusual or worthwhile, leading to faith. That is why we do not believe in him or his book.”

It was clear that Tasimanès was unable to put up with this. Yet he responded, saying: “There was a reference to Muhammad in the Gospel, but you cut it out.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, setting out from the farthest East, he progressed victoriously, as you can see, all the way to the West.” I, then, said to him: “Insofar as the Gospel is concerned, nothing was ever cut out from it by any Christian or altered in any way. There are heavy, and most shivering curses for such an act, and he who dares to either cut out or to alter anything is cut off actually from Christ. How is it possible, then, that a Christian do such a thing, or how could he be still a Christian, or in any way acceptable among the Christians, if he had erased off what has been divinely engraved and what Christ himself imprinted or foretold? Witnesses to this are also the many and various dialects in which the gospel of Christ was conveyed from the very beginning; it was not originally written in only one



[dialect]. If anything was distorted, how did this pass unnoticed, and how was such an agreement kept in the minds of various nations until today? Also, many people of a different faith have the Gospel of Christ whom we call heretics, among whom there are some who agree with us on some issues. Yet, they, too, do not have any such thing to show in the Gospel of Christ. Even among those who were adversaries from the beginning—and there are many of these—there is no such thing to be shown. The opposite, rather, can be found clearly in the Gospel. How is it then that the Gospel confirmed something to the opponents which itself does not contain and which was not told before to the divine prophets? If there had been anything good about Muhammad written in the Gospel, it would have also been written in the prophets. On the contrary, you may rather find that it is not wiped out but written that “many false Christs and false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”**51**

If Christ were like Moses and the prophets of all ages, before and after him (they all returned through death to the earth, resting there and awaiting the judge who is to come from heaven), the same would have happened with Him. In that case, another prophet should have come after him again who would have ascended into heaven and brought his [mission] to an end, for the end of everything that is here is in heaven.**52** However, as you also confess, Christ did ascend into heaven, and no one in the right mind expects anyone after Him. Not only did Christ ascend into heaven, but it is the same who is expected to return as you, too, confess. Thus, he is the one who came, who comes, and who is expected to return, and we, rightly so, neither accept nor are we waiting for anyone other than Him. He is expected to come again to judge all men. Why? Because, as He Himself said, the light that is He and His teaching came and became manifest to the world, but men, promulgating different teachings and indulging deeply in their own desires, loved the darkness rather than the light.**53** So that this may not happen to us, the pinnacle of the disciples of Christ says, “There will be false teachers and false prophets who will bring destructive heresies, and in their greed, they will exploit you with false words; for many will follow their licentiousness.”**54** Another one says, “Even if an angel should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.”**55** And the evangelist says, “Every spirit which does not confess that the Lord Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.”**56** How would He who says that “he who confesses that Jesus—the one manifested in flesh—is not Lord, is not from God” have given a book that says he who confirms this comes from God? This is not possible; not at all!

Muhammad marched from the East, and he progressed victoriously to the West. He did so, however, by means of war and the sword, with pillage, enslavement and executions, none of which has its origin in God, the righteous One, but he is advancing the will of him who from the beginning was the destroyer of man. How about Alexander? Did he not, starting from the West, conquer the East? There have also been other men at other times who, after repeated campaigns, over-ruled the entire world. However, no nation entrusted their souls to any of them, as you did with Muhammad, who, although he resorted to violence and allowed licentious things, did not

take into his fold even a whole portion of the world. On the other hand, the teaching of Christ, although it directs one away from almost all the pleasures of the world, has embraced the universe to its ends. It endures even among its enemies without instigating violence, but rather every time winning the adversary force, for “this is the victory that has overcome the world.”<sup>57</sup>

When I was saying this, the Christians who happened to be there, seeing that the Turks were already getting irritated, signalled me to finish my speech. And I, changing to a milder tone and smiling gently at them, said again, “After all, if we were in one accord, we would be of one and the same faith, too.” But let him, who is intelligent, appreciate the meaning of what we said. Then, one of them said, “There will come a time when we will agree with each other.” I consented and amplified my wish that such a time would come more quickly. But why did I say this for those who abide by a different faith now rather than for those who would be living then? I consented because I remembered the Apostle’s saying that “at the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”;<sup>58</sup> and this will certainly come to pass in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this, the gathering dispersed for the day. As to what went on the next days, the spirit was willing, but the hand was not strong enough to write about. That much I wrote for those of you who desire to know. For children, and even more so those who are mindful of their spiritual adoption, want to know the experiences of their father. As when I was with you, I used, privately and publicly, to teach you persistently with my words the way that leads to salvation, never lowering my standards even though some thought I was heavy to bear, the same thing I do now that I am absent and in the midst of tribulation. Even briefly, I am writing to you all, not withholding anything; for [this way] we become rich in God,<sup>59</sup> the living and the true One, who is witnessed to not only by God the Father and the God-sent prophets but also by their works and deeds. Justifiably, therefore, He demands that our faith in Him be alive, truthful and witnessed to by God and by the teachers who come from God, as well as by their works and deeds. This, then, will be accomplished if we live according to the injunctions of the Gospel. In this way, the spirit of the grace of the Gospel “bears witness,” according to the Apostle, “with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”<sup>60</sup> This is the living faith, for “faith apart from works is dead,”<sup>61</sup> says another one of the preachers of faith. And something that is dead is not welcome by the living God, for God “is not God of the dead but of the living.”<sup>62</sup> He, therefore, whose faith is dead for lack of good deeds, is himself also dead for not living and being in God—the only one who provides true and inviolate life; until such time as he experiences, like the saved prodigal son, the poverty that he suffered by taking distance from the deeds of life, and returns to God through the deeds of repentance, and until he hears from Him, the words like that saved prodigal son, “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”<sup>63</sup> This is the way to have a true faith. For faith that is not witnessed to by works of salvation is no more faith than unbelief and no more confession than apostasy. This is what he who talks about such things indicates: “They profess to know God, but

they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed.”<sup>64</sup> Another of the fellow disciples says: “Show me your faith with your deeds”<sup>65</sup> and “Who is faithful; by his good life let him show his deeds.”<sup>66</sup> What is the merit if one says that he has faith, but he shows no deeds? Can faith save him? Not at all. You may believe that Christ is one God, along with the Father and the Spirit. Good enough. However, even the demons believe and are terrified when they say, “We know who you are: the Son of God in the Highest.”<sup>67</sup> And yet the demons are adversaries precisely because they oppose God with their works.

Be mindful not to be like these ill-minded men; I do not mean regarding your reverence in God, but rather in your conduct as they suffered in the doctrine. For they confess that he who was born of the Virgin is the Word of God and spirit of His and Christ, that is God-man, but then they flee and break away from him madly as non-God. Take heed, therefore, not to be like them and find yourselves, on the one hand, confessing that the virtues and the biblical injunctions are righteous and, on the other hand, with your deeds breaking away from them as if they were not so; showing that what is indeed good is not good for you and what is indeed permissible is something to flee from.

Tell me, how is it possible that an unbeliever may trust you when you say that you believe in Him who was born of the Virgin, born from the Father beyond time and before all ages, and subsequently in time—in a supernatural way—by a mother, but you practice neither chastity nor prudence. You rather insist passionately and unrepentantly on the opposite [acts] and let yourself be surrendered to debauchery? How can the drunkard and the glutton show themselves as having become, through the Spirit, adopted sons of Him who fasted in the desert for forty days and who, with His example, gave the ordinance of temperance? How can he who loves injustice be one [an adopted son] of Him who commands us to judge with right judgment<sup>68</sup> or the heartless, of Him who said “Be merciful, even as your Father in Heaven is merciful”;<sup>69</sup> or he who has no sympathy and magnanimity towards those who fail or he shows no gentleness, tolerance and humility, to Him who showed us these virtues with deeds and who urged us towards them with words? For He says: “Learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”;<sup>70</sup> and “if you do not forgive the trespasses of your brethren, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.”<sup>71</sup> Even when he was hanging on the cross, offering Himself as an example to us, He kept saying to the Father not to hold this sin against them.

One might, of course, say that He was God and, as such, detached from evil. I have many things to say about this, but time does not allow me. I am not asking from you, however, for divine but human goodness. Make a start in this goodness, and God will provide its perfection. Detach yourself from evil; stay in the place of virtue. Undertake the deeds of repentance, and while waiting, you will receive from God not only the perfection of human goodness, but you will also acquire the supernatural divine virtues by the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in you. This is how man is deified, for he who is clinging to God by means of the works of virtue becomes one

spirit with God,<sup>72</sup> through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This may be with you all always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## NOTES

\* See [\(81\) 5. "Captivity and Dialogue: Gregory Palamas \(1296-1360\) and the Muslims", The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 25 \(1980\) 409-436. | Daniel Sahas - Academia.edu](#)

23. Arnakis identifies him with Balaban, “one of the most prominent of Osman’s associates, usually mentioned as Balabangik, who is connected with the blockade of Brusa.” Cf. *Speculum* (1951) 112-13.

24. Lit. “Turks”.

25. Gr. *alogos*. The word means both “without word” or speech, as well as “without reason.”

26. Gen. 1.3.

27. Gen. 1.11.

28. Cf. Ps. 32(33).9.

29. Gen. 2.7.

30. Job 33.4.

31. The writer uses the expression *ho Thessalonikes* = the (bishop) of Thessaloniki in all instances. In this translation, I preferred to shorten the phrase to “the bishop.”

32. Ps. 106(107).20.

33. Ps. 103(104).30.

34. Cf. Ps. 10(11).8. -

35. Cf. Job 14.4-5.

36. Ps. 50(51).5.

37. Surah 3.59: “Lo! The likeness of Jesus with Adam is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust, then He said unto him: Be! and he is.”

38. Heb. 1.2.

39. Jn, 5.43.

40. Gal. 1.8.

41. The text at this point is incomplete.

42. Cf. Ex. 20.4.

43. Lit., lecture.

44. Le., in the year 1355.

45. Chartoularios, keeper of archives.

46. Cf. Surah, 4.172; 19.30, (93); 43.59.

47. Gen. 18.25 (Samuel Bagster translation of The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament).

The Greek version of the Septuagint suggests a different translation (“Thou..., shalt thou not pass a judgment? [or] . . . make a ruling?”), which is in closer agreement with the Hebrew and

contextually more justifiable. The RSV (“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”) is equally presumptuous.

48. Daniel, 5.21.

49. These are the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel of Jesus and the Qur’an of Muhammad. On account of the acceptance of this prophetic progressive revelation, the Jews and the Christians are, to the Muslims, the ‘People of the Book’ (*ahl-al-kitab*).

50. This is the Islamic doctrine of *tahrif* or ‘corruption,’ according to which the Christians have corrupted their Scriptures to conceal their prediction of the advent of Muhammad.

51. Mt. 24.11, 24.

52. Cf. Lk. 21.8, 9.

53. Cf. In. 3.19.

54. Cf. 2 Pet. 2.1-3.

55. Cf. Gal. 1.8.

56. Cf. 1 In. 4.3, 4.

57. Cf. 1 In. 5.4.

58. Cf. Phil. 2.10-11.

59. Cf. Lk. 12.21.

60. Rom, 8.16-17.

61. Jas. 2.26.

62. Mt. 22.32.

63. Lk, 15.24.

64. Tit. 1.16.

65. Jas. 2.18.

66. Cf. Jas. 3.13.

67. Cf. Mk. 5.7.

68. Cf. Jn. 7.24.

69. Cf. Lk. 6.36.

70. Mt. 11.29.

71. Cf. Mt. 6.15.

72. Cf. 1 Cor. 6.17.